

History of Starbuck

By [Miranda Caudill](#)

Starbuck is a small town of only 129 residents located in southeastern Washington near the Snake River. It has a warm climate and mild winters. The Snake River, Tucannon River, and surrounding land make the area ideal for farming and ranching. One may wonder how a small town such as Starbuck came into existence in rural Washington.

During the late 1870s, the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company (later known as the Union Pacific Company) built a railroad and Starbuck became a small station along the route. As men were employed at this station, they would bring their families with them. A store, warehouse, and blacksmith were soon constructed. By 1882, Starbuck was a bustling railroad town. Three years later, the Pomeroy line from Starbuck to Pomeroy was built. This line brought in more visitors and money to Starbuck. By 1895, the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company had built a general merchandise store, a grocery store, a cigar and tobacco shop, a drugstore, a restaurant, two hotels (including the McIntosh Hotel and the Pearson House), a shoe shop, a tailor shop, a blacksmith shop, and a livery stable.

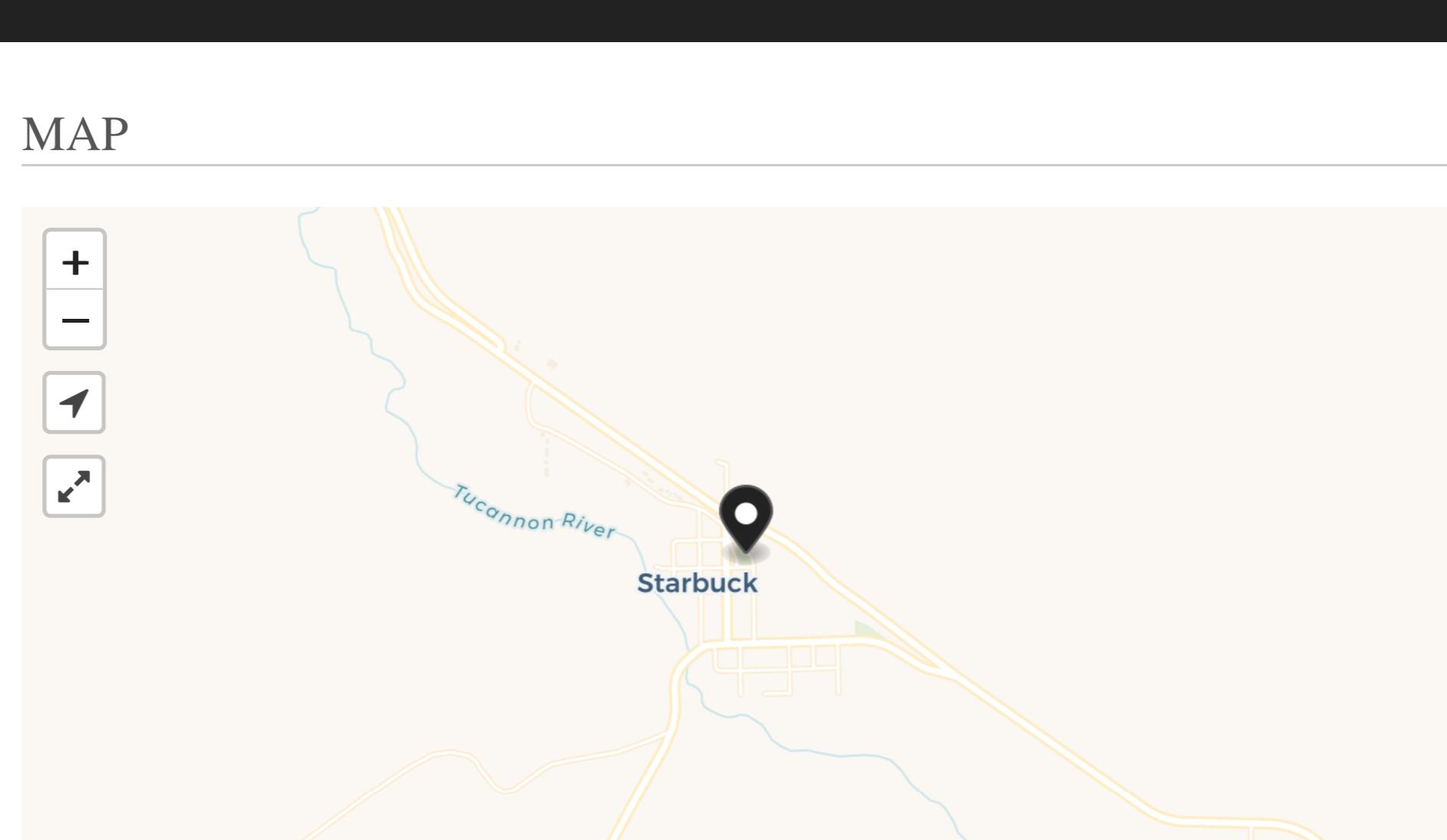
In 1893, an official of the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company, W.H. Starbuck of New York, named the small town by presenting it with a bell for their first Presbyterian Church. After the church was later demolished, the bell was put into storage for several years until it was finally hung in one of Starbuck's parks on Front and Baxter Street in 1953.

The Great Depression, starting in 1929, nearly turned Starbuck into a ghost town. The bank closed and homes were sold and demolished. Farmers were asked to stop farming and raising pigs because there was a surplus of wheat and pigs. Many residents and farmers went into debt trying to make a living in Starbuck. Luckily, the residents were able to benefit from an organization Roosevelt created called the Works Progress Administration which employed men to build and repair roads and public works. Remnants of this work remain in the town till this day.

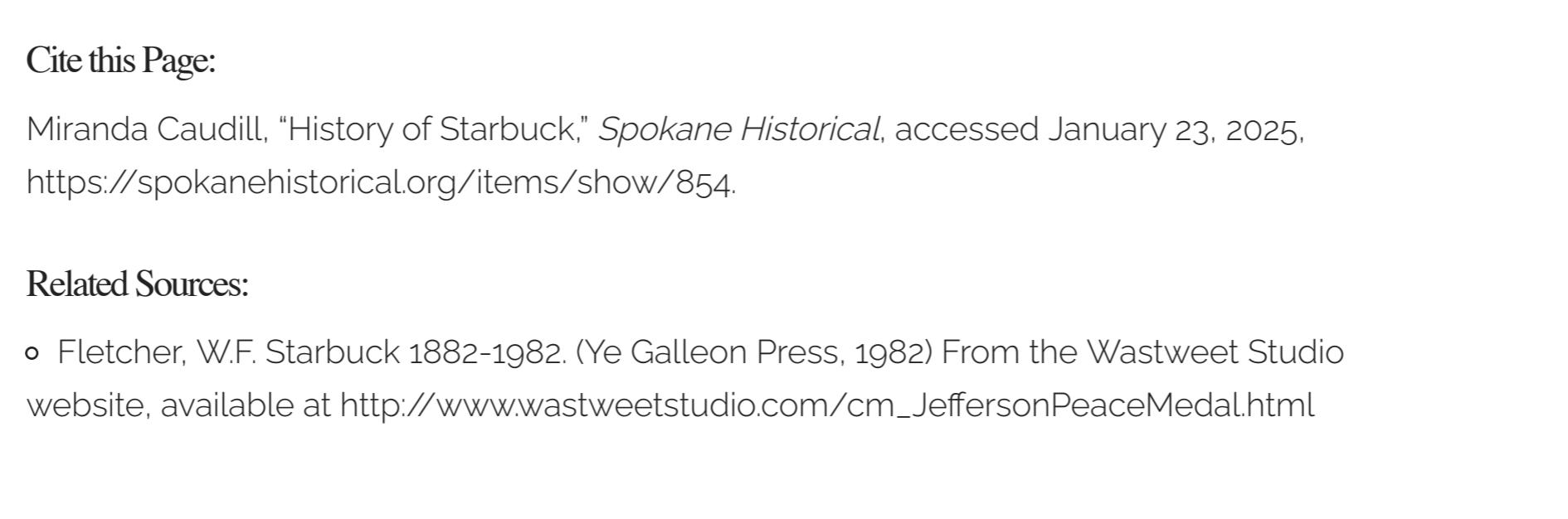
Although Starbuck was prone to floods for most of their existence, the town was able to make many improvements to prevent them from happening. After a disastrous flood swept through Starbuck in the early 1960s, dikes were built along the Tucannon, and Starbuck did not experience another flood. Later in that decade, workers began construction on the Lower Monumental Dam and the Little Goose Dam in the Snake River. Being one of the nearest towns to these dams, Starbuck's population jumped from 200 to 1,000 residents almost overnight. Trailer parks and businesses on wheels flooded the town. Starbuck benefited from this economic boom, as it allowed them to improve the aesthetics of their town.

Today Starbuck is a quiet hamlet of 129 souls. The residents work at the Rawhide Bar N Grill and Darver Tackle, and many enjoy going to Starbuck every Fourth of July for a fantastic lighting of fireworks.

IMAGES



MAP



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Miranda Caudill, "History of Starbuck," *Spokane Historical*, accessed January 23, 2025.

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